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ABSTRACT

In 1993, the Ministry of Education and Training in Ontario (Canada) issued a curriculum policy document that defined educational outcomes and recommended that many of the outcomes could be achieved through an integrated approach to learning. This study considers the third year after the mandated changes began. Other changes, including a new curriculum, are in the wings, making it clear that whatever the future holds, educators will continue to deal with an enormous amount of change. The study took a multisite, case-study approach, continuing efforts of the preceding 2 years. In the third year, 25 interviews were conducted. As in previous years, it was found that change was being implemented in pockets, with some very advanced in understanding and implementation and others tending to stay with the status quo to a greater or lesser degree. The link between central offices and schools was often disappointing, in part because government policy had reduced the staffing in the central offices. Teachers generally described themselves as learners, and they were able to understand and implement curriculum reform demands when there was a common understanding among staff and administrators. Most successful were efforts in outcome-based learning and alternative assessment, probably because these areas are linked to public concerns about education. In the first year of the study, many teachers resisted change, and stress was a major concern of teachers. By this third year, most teachers had accepted that change was inevitable, and stress was not mentioned with the same intensity. Some teachers were becoming teacher leaders in promoting policies beyond their own classrooms, and many teachers were shifting their professional development focus to long-term projects in the schools rather than brief inservice training. At the end of 3 years of reform, teachers are basically positive about the changes, with the will and persistence to meet the demands of future reforms. (Contains 13 references.) (SLD)

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Negotiating New Models of Education
Year III

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Context

In February 1993, the Ministry of Education and Training of Ontario issued a curriculum policy document entitled, *The Common Curriculum*. The document defined outcomes at a number of levels. First, there were ten broad cross-curricular outcomes. Then, there were outcomes defined for the four major curriculum areas; and, finally, there were a large number of more specific outcomes suggested for grades 3, 6, and 9. A second important feature of the document is that it recommended that many of the outcomes should be achieved through an integrated approach to learning. The document organized subject matter into four broad areas: the arts; language; self and society; and math, science and technology. The Ministry, in a memorandum, also deleted any time requirements for subjects except for French. This meant that schools potentially had a lot of freedom to organize the curriculum to achieve the stated outcomes. Finally, the Ministry focused on the transitions years (grades 7 to 9). Besides the move to integrated learning and outcomes-based education, the Ministry mandated destreaming for Grade 9. Previous to this mandate, students were streamed into basic, general, and advanced levels in this grade.

During the period when many of these changes were announced, there was a strong demand for accountability from parents and the media. These demands led to initiation of programs to develop standards in Math and English, and to begin a testing program in English. The government also announced a Royal Commission on Learning that was to make recommendations on almost all aspects of the educational system. The recommendations of the Commission were released in January 1995 along with a revised copy of the Common Curriculum.

During this time there was an extremely difficult financial climate that has led to broad staffing cuts. These cuts were intensified under the new Progressive Conservative government elected in 1995 and have included layoffs of teachers in many boards. By 1997, the government decreed that school boards be amalgamated, reducing the total number of school boards from 129 to 66. Thus, while the government was demanding the largest change in education in a generation, there are diminishing resources to support the change.

As we complete this study, the government has just announced that the Common Curriculum is dead and is being replaced by the Ontario Curriculum Grades 1-8: Languages 1997 and the Ontario Curriculum Grades 1 to 8: Mathematics 1997. High school reform is in full swing. Destreaming has been dropped and high school itself is being reduced from 5 years to 4.

The immediate reaction for many is that the wheel has turned full circle. Those who resisted the changes brought in by the Common Curriculum are loudly proclaiming, "I told you

so." Others are reluctant to embrace the latest direction, believing that they finally have made sense of the Common Curriculum and they like it. We tend to believe that, in reality, education across North America is still moving toward large scale reform and that the new documents are steps toward this reform. Often real change takes 2 steps back and one step forward. The concept of the new basics are in place, with the added element of accountability, through introducing expectations that both teacher, parent and students can understand. How we teach to these expectations is still open to interpretation and it is here that the lessons teachers have learned in the past few years will be useful. We are still very much in the process of negotiating new models of education for changing times.

Whatever the future holds, it is still clear that the one thing that hold true is that educators will be dealing with enormous amount of change.

It is in this climate that this study took place. In our study we collaborated with four boards of education. One board (Board A) is a large, suburban board with 68 elementary schools and 18 secondary schools, and a total of approximately 44,000 students and 2,450 teachers. A second board of education (Board B) is a Roman Catholic separate school board with 48 elementary schools and 5 secondary schools, and approximately 27,000 students and 1,100 teachers. The third board (Board C) is a medium-sized public board with 54 elementary schools and 14 secondary schools, and approximately 27,000 students and 1,400 teachers. The last board (Board D) is a smaller board located in a rural area and includes 21 elementary schools and 5 secondary schools with approximately 10,000 students and 550 teachers. It should be noted that the co-investigators have worked with all of these boards on various projects over periods as long as 12 years. In general, we feel this has allowed for easy access to the schools, administrators, consultants, and teachers to carry out this study.

The Methodology

This study took a multi-site, case-study approach. As researchers we sought to understand the educational culture of four boards during the implementation period and the meaning of the experience for individuals involved in the process. The inquiry process was guided by the theory, technique, and practice of interpretive inquirers such as Bogdan and Biklin (1992), Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Gleshne and Peshkin (1992). The study focused on how educational personnel are dealing with changes related to outcomes-based learning, alternative assessment procedures, integrated curriculum, and the collaboration process related to these changes. In each board at least one elementary school and one high school, as well as the people at the system level (e.g., superintendents and consultants) were interviewed. Purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) of key informants was used.

Working collaboratively, we established a slightly different design with each board. Essentially, however, interviews were the primary research tool. In-depth, unstructured interview techniques were guided by the work of researchers such as Spradley (1979), Mischler (1986), and Seidman (1990). Interviews were transcribed. Interview transcripts were shared with interviewees and some changes were made.

Figure 1 shows the interview schedule over two years. The data analysis across the four boards was shared with participating educators through a newsletter called Changing Times and an annual report.

			INTERVIEWS HELD					
			YEAR ONE 94-95		YEAR TWO 95-96		YEAR THREE 96-97	
BOARDS	STAFF	STUDENTS	ADMINISTRATORS	TEACHERS	ADMINISTRATORS	TEACHERS	ADMINISTRATORS	TEACHERS
BOARD A-ELEMENTARY	49	598	1	6	0	4	0	4
BOARD A - SECONDARY	60	755	1	7	2	8	1	8
BOARD A - CENTRAL OFFICE	n/a	—	10 *	—	—	—	6**	—
BOARD B - ELEMENTARY	21	465	1	3	1	4	—	8
BOARD B - SECONDARY	91	1400	2	5	2	4	2	4
BOARD B - CENTRAL OFFICE	n/a	—	5	—	5	—	4	—
BOARD C - ELEMENTARY	15	334	1	4	—	6	2	5
BOARD C - SECONDARY 1	42	631	1	3	2	6	2	5
BOARD C - SECONDARY 2	36	359	intensive ethnographic case study					
BOARD C - CENTRAL OFFICE	n/a	—	6	—	5	—	4	—
BOARD D - ELEMENTARY ***	7 11	172 176	1 1	4 3	1 2	5 4	—	4 3
BOARD D - SECONDARY	42	739	—	—	2	5	—	4
BOARD D - CENTRAL OFFICE	n/a	—	6	—	5	—	4	—
TOTAL INTERVIEWS			36	35	28	46	25	45

* 3 Interviews were members of the Community Council

** 2 Interviews were members of the Community Council

*** K-6 and 7/8 twinned schools

Figure 1

Interview Protocol

In the third year, 25 interviews were conducted. The interview format included the questions found in Figure 2. Additional questions were added depending on the context. Participants were invited to participate in the interviews by the principals or vice-principal in the various schools. We asked that principals select a range of people in terms of age, experience, and approaches to teaching. We did not want to interview only teachers who were enthusiastic about the changes. In most cases, the data reveal a broad range of opinion, so we believe the principals accommodated our request.

Interview Protocol

1. Could you describe your experiences with:

- outcomes-based learning;
- integrated curriculum;
- student assessment related to procedures of outcomes-based learning?

a)What has been the student response to these activities?
b)Has the process involved collaboration? Are there other examples of collaboration that you have been involved in?
c)What professional development experiences have helped you in this process?

2. What are the challenges in your work? How are you coping with the challenges?

3. How has the role of the teacher changed over the past few years?

a) Do you see yourself as a leader in any way and if so how?
b) Do you see yourself as a learner in any way and if so how?

4. How is the leadership provided by

a) the Principal and VP?
b) Department Head or Division Head?
c) Consultant

5. What have your learned over the past few years?

Consultants/Central Office

1) How has your role as consultant changed over the past few years?

2) What has your influence been in the system?

3) What do you feel is the level of support among teachers for the changes (e.g. OBE, integrated curriculum, etc.)?

Figure 2

The interview data were transcribed and then were analyzed, first by the research assistants. Assistants went through the interviews that they had conducted; data were coded and categorized (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). One of the co-investigators analyzed her field notes using the same methodology. Several meetings that included both the co-investigators and the research assistants occurred. Here, discussions on the data and data analysis led to a common understanding of the procedures involved. After these initial analyses, one of the co-investigators went through original transcripts as well as the data provided by the researchers and developed a report based on these data. His interpretation was presented at a final team meeting where each member had a chance for further input.

Findings

Outcomes

The first year of the study, we found that most of the teachers were experiencing difficulties in using outcomes to plan and to teach. However, we found in the second year that more teachers were comfortable with using OBE in their planning, particularly at the elementary level.

This trend continued through the third year of the study. One superintendent stated:

> "I think that our elementary schools are making some good progress in general in coming to terms with The Common Curriculum and what's happening in terms of outcomes-based education. That doesn't mean every teacher is beyond an awareness level but certainly many are planning their programs with outcomes in mind."

From a different board, a VP characterized the work in outcomes this way:

> "We as a staff have used outcomes-based education as crux of communication for the last two or three years. We've been developing more and more activities using outcomes-based planning, certainly that's of prime importance to us."

A consultant from a third board put it this way:

> "There's a much greater comfort level that I detect this year,. . . .It's that people are thinking in that way now, much more so than last year."

In this board, outcomes are being used not only by classroom teachers but to focus the board's change management program as well. As one consultant describes it, they began with a "clear picture of the person as the learner... which includes sets of knowledge, dispositions, habits of mind, relational skills". Based on this image, the board came up with eleven essential outcomes, including a Catholic one which animates the other ten. Specific outcomes are all derived from these essential outcomes and guide integration and assessment. In this board, outcomes have become a way of making meaning which influence decision-making throughout the board structure. Thus, outcomes are used to plan and assess principals' meetings and curriculum committee work.

A school from another board has also adopted outcomes to guide the entire operation of the school. The report cards for this school contain outcome-based comments. One teacher comments: "The report card that we generate is completely focused on the learning outcomes for both English and Social Science. This is my third year in that program and it has been running fairly well."

Teachers sometimes see a continuum of how outcomes can be used in the school. One teacher said: "Outcomes-based education is growing from a process of teachers using outcomes to determine what students will learn, to students determining what they will learn and also to teachers describing their own growth as well."

The response to outcomes will be described more fully in another section but many teachers commented that students like seeing a product at the end of a unit..

Of course, there were exceptions to these trends. One secondary school principal stated that there is less pressure to do outcomes-based planning:

> "It's interesting that the very high value that was originally placed on outcomes-based education and integrated curriculum before has now disappeared. There is very little talk about outcomes-based education."

A consultant from this same board raised concerns about outcomes-based education that teachers have, for example:

> "I'm sorry I have 35 kids in my class and you're asking me for 10 outcomes across language arts and the guy in Geography is asking me for X outcomes. But, I teach in 5 subjects and I am also trying to do something with a choir and band. . . you know. . .get out of my face. It's just not workable."

A teacher from another board expressed her concerns this way:

> "By the time I get through trying to slot all this stuff into the outcomes-based sort of language, I'm not sure what I'm doing anymore. . . .Right now it's almost like I'm spending three times as long and getting half as much out of it."

In general, however, the majority of teachers and administrators that we interviewed were more comfortable this year with outcomes-based education and were involved in using outcomes sometimes in a variety of formats and settings. One consultant summed up the impact of outcomes based education this way.

> "I think the fact that outcomes are based on observable, measurable types of indicators and are based on a real life contextual type of learning, makes it self-motivating for the student. Those are the types of issues that are hard to dispute, especially if the results are that much better and the learning is that much more focused."

Integrated Curriculum

In the first year of the study we found that most teachers focused on integrated curriculum as a means of connecting subjects to real life experiences. A secondary focus was on connecting subjects around themes. But at the same time there was also a concern about artificial themes and forcing subjects into these themes in an unnatural way. We found that integration was most prominent at the primary level and then became less frequent as one moved through the various divisions. In the first year, participants identified many barriers to integration including the timetable and lack of planning time; yet there were signs of movement towards integrated curriculum in most of the schools where we conducted interviews.

The findings this year bear a close resemblance to the past two years. In general there is movement to integration in small pockets but we didn't find any "breakthroughs" as we found in outcomes-based learning. In one high school we are beginning to see the "integrated approach" emerge at the senior grade levels. As a senior level biology teacher stated, "in the senior grades and courses I see a lot of integration going on. I think as teachers work more collaboratively, they see more and more opportunities to begin to integrate aspects of their courses." Therefore, integration is starting to spread from the grade nine program, throughout the school.

This year we also found that several administrators commented on the limitations of integrated curriculum and their reluctance to implement it on a system-wide basis. For example, one consultant saw a conflict between integrated curriculum and assessment strategies.

"I guess I have a lot of problem with the concept of integrated curriculum--figuring out what it is that people are proposing and how we can practically do it. Language arts is an example where we have been integrated or have followed an integrated philosophy for 25 years. Reading, writing, speaking, you know were all the same ball of wax, but now in *The Common Curriculum*, we are going to break them up and give them separate assessments. It would seem that while one side of the mouth you're (the Ministry) saying "Let's integrate", on the other side of the mouth you're saying, 'Let's pull language apart... and let's give it separate marks'."

Another elementary school principal simply doubted its value beyond the early grades as he said "I think my own belief is that the further you go on in education the less value there is in integration." A superintendent from another board felt that integrated curriculum should be limited in scope, while another superintendent felt that their board had to go slowly with regard to integrated curriculum because they still had to spend more time on outcomes and assessment strategies.

Teachers in one secondary school commented on the difficulty of integration. For example, one history teacher, noted that several conversations to integrate a course of local history and geography had come to nothing because the geography head had been unavoidably absent when it was time to plan. A science teacher and a technology teacher both noted a partnership with a local conservation authority in which students built birdhouses. While this activity provided a natural opportunity to integrate the two subjects, timetabling problems had prevented integration.

However, most of the teachers we interviewed tended to be more positive than the administrators. Some teachers made the connection between OBE and integrated curriculum. One teacher stated: " I also realized with using a theme like peace, where it can touch across many different areas or many different disciplines." Another teacher made the connection to holistic learning when she said; " My understanding of the integrated curriculum is making things holistic for children so that learning makes sense. An example of that would be in mathematics, I always incorporate literature."

Even though there are many challenges and obstacles to implementing integrated curriculum, teachers still report a great deal of satisfaction in working with integrated curriculum and outcomes-based learning. As one teacher stated, "I am enjoying it more and more. Last year was overwhelming, it was so busy; this year I am working so much more closely with my co-

teacher in class. I look forward to that class everyday, because I know it is going to be a good experience."

Like last year, teachers cited many examples of integrated curriculum. At the elementary level a grade three teacher explained that she is doing a unit on multiculturalism and the students are using math as a vehicle. So she has the students look at weaving from different cultures and the use of vertical and horizontal lines. A grade four teacher in another board explained how she does a unit on advertising that includes language, the social sciences, spelling, art and physical education. She also does a unit on trees that she feel includes almost every subject in the curriculum. A grade six teacher also described a unit on Egypt:

> "For example the Grade 6's are doing Egypt right now and they are using the Internet. They are studying geometry and tying that to the pyramids. There are some design and technology activities that tie in nicely with that--levers and things. The reading and writing as well. It is social science driven but it all fits."

At the intermediate level one teacher described a unit on the media that includes art, public speaking, math, and research skills as well as exploration of different forms of media.

Teachers at the secondary level also presented several examples of integrated curriculum. For example one teacher described a project in business, art, and technology where "students will be working with students in the other disciplines to run a business. The business involves sign making and desk-top publishing." A teacher from another school described a unit for Grade 9 students involving a project on the zoo. This included some scientific activities such as species identification as well as dealing with the ethical question "Are zoos good places for animals?" A teacher from another board described an interesting project that integrated business and history. In this project the students produced a newspaper on World War I and letters from soldiers writing home.

Integration seems to be taking place in pockets of teacher-directed projects. In sum activity in integrated curriculum continues but many educators at all levels expressed concerns about integration.

Student Assessment

In the first year we found that, while teachers at the elementary school level were using alternative forms of assessments (e.g., portfolios, observation, peer- and self-assessment), there was more reliance on paper and pencil tests at the transition and specialization years level. Some administrators felt that assessment needed the most work in terms of professional development

for teachers. In the second year we found pretty much the same the story with a few more teachers at secondary level using alternative modes of assessment.

This year we found much more activity with regard to alternative modes of assessment. Teachers at all levels mentioned that use of strategies like peer assessment and the use of portfolios. This year, rubrics were also mentioned more frequently than in the last two years.

A history teacher at one high school observes that there are few changes this year. "We always used a very wide range of assessment anyway, from peer assessment to self assessment to criterion reference marking to holistic marking". In contrast, a science teacher at the same school notes the change in the department's philosophy as they moved to assessing "a large array of skills, attitudes, behaviours and content".

One elementary VP put it this way:

> "More and more I see authentic assessment. It's not a pen and paper test as there is more a focus on the product. . . .Criteria based evaluation is used far more now than before."

A teacher at another school said: "But in terms of looking at the Junior and Intermediate students, we do a lot of self-assessment with the students and peer assessment." A teacher at this same school said: "Most of the teachers on the Grade 7 team have moved towards observation, student checklists, peer evaluation, self-evaluation, conferencing with the students." Teachers also talk about how they involve the students in the process so that students know how they are being assessed. Students then are brought into an interview with the teacher and parents as part of the reporting and conferencing process. One teacher described how she used videos in the assessment process. She videotaped the students during a drama class and then played it back in class so their peers would evaluate the pronunciation and the acting.

There also seemed to be marked increase in authentic assessment at the secondary level. Several teachers mentioned that they used peer evaluation in their classes. One school has built assessment into the entire life of the school as teacher assessment is also based on portfolios and rubrics.

One of the most noticeable differences from the previous two years was the use of rubrics this year. One teacher describes the process:

> "I have started a lot of the more performance criteria, rubrics. I went over it (the rubric) with the students before they did the main work on it so they knew what to expect, and then I used it to grade that way. . . .Then I sent that home with my comments to the parents, and used that in conferencing when they were in last week for their parents/student conferences. I was really surprised. I thought I would have to explain it

> more to the parents but they really got the hang of it pretty quickly and I think the students felt more ownership over it because they could actually see where they were."

An English and drama teacher commented on the benefits of alternative forms of assessment by saying,

> "this approach to assessment encourages more independent learning on the part of my students . . . and [consequently] they have a better understanding of how to value their own work in class."

There are some challenges to the new approaches to assessment. Some staff are still struggling with the new forms of assessment, particularly in linking outcomes to assessment. One teacher expressed reservation about rubrics as he felt that students had trouble with them. One teacher expressed difficulty in using portfolios while another had reservations about peer assessment. Another challenge reported involves helping parents understand the shift from the old "marks approach" to the new approach to student assessment. As a result, several informal and formal meetings were held with parents to explain the differences between the old and new approaches to assessment.

In summary, however, there seemed to be a "breakthrough" in the number of teachers using alternative forms of assessment and a wider range of alternative assessment tools in use.

Student Response

This year we asked how students were responding to outcomes based education, integrated curriculum and alternative forms of assessment. Teachers tended to focus more on how students responded to integrated curriculum and assessment activities since students have more direct experience with these. In general, teachers indicated that the student response is very positive. Here are some responses from elementary school teachers with regard to integrated curriculum:

> "They love it. They got into the role, dressed in the role and were good debaters and evaluators. We had spent a lot of time on the criteria as a class."

> "The kids really liked it. It was written as an integrated unit with the outcomes and had games, math, reading and history."

"I think they feel more like active participants, and I feel that they are more knowledgeable about what is going on."

"The kids love them (the activities). We take the time to plan together. Any integrated unit that I do in the classroom, the kids have input into brainstorming in the beginning. ...It's directly related to what's happening in society, in human experience, life. So it's something meaningful to the kids."

Teachers at the secondary level also commented positively on student response although there were a few teachers who had either mixed or negative responses. In one such mixed response a teacher said, "If the kids are loving every second of every class then something is wrong because kids are too different. You can't please, incite, excite all of the kids all of the time because the kids are too different." More typically, one French teacher said: I think the integrated curriculum activities are where I've obtained the best response." A communications technology teacher commented: "The response is excellent. We get kids wanting to take the course over and over again, even if they don't get credit for it because they enjoy it so much." A science teacher stated: "I think they enjoy it. They enjoy the variety. And one of the things I have noticed in my years as a teacher is that kids are always looking for relevancy." An English teacher stated: "I think that it has been good. If I can go on what the students say to me at the end of the year. They say that they've learned a lot. They feel that they've been challenged. They feel they're prepared." At the same school where outcomes based learning and alternative assessment are employed throughout the school the principal said:

"In the past year, teachers from outside have said to me, "Your kids are different" which has just been wonderful. These teachers tell me "Students are very comfortable with themselves... .they present their ideas really well."

Elementary school teachers made the following comments about student responses to the assessment activities:

"I find that students really like to know exactly what is expected of them."

"I think it takes a lot of stress off students. Because they know exactly how they are going to be assessed. . . It gives them a greater role in their own assessment."

One teacher, referring to assessment approaches, stated that he feels the student response varies depending on the age level. He finds the senior level students respond better than the younger students.

In general, most teachers we interviewed commented very positively about how students were responding to the changes in the curriculum.

Collaboration

The importance of collaboration has been identified by participants in the study over the past three years. This year, people affirmed this view with reference to their own experiences. There are several levels of collaboration. First is simply informal collaboration. This is where teachers feel comfortable approaching each other in the school to ask each other questions and share resources. Another level is where two teachers work together. One teacher explained how she had worked with another teacher for the past two years. Another level is where a team or division meets regularly to plan and develop curriculum. One intermediate teacher said:

> "We meet regularly as a Grade 7 team, for two 40 minute periods a week. We get together before and after school. We set about to do some planning where we were piloting the report card where we actually stayed as a team and had supper at the school and just worked into the evening. It is a very, very supportive group of teachers."

A high school teacher commented on the benefits of integrated workrooms as a means to fostering collaboration.:

> "The workrooms in this school are integrated and that is very different. If I were in another school, I would only be with drama and art people. Here I sit beside a computer science teacher. At first, I thought, "oh this will be interesting." Yet, I found where we differ is actually a benefit. There's a lot to gain from understanding the differences. I believe this school eliminates isolation and brings many different teachers together."

One elementary teacher described the involvement of parents.

> "The parents got involved and ...want to come in and help. We had parents who own businesses who gave us things to use. . . The really collaborative part of it was when the parents came to the Cafe, we needed customers and that was the collaborative effort I'd say."

As another teacher observed:

> "You know it's funny, I find the more I work with other teachers, the more I want to work with them. It's becoming natural in this school. I also find that collaboration helps me to think in a more integrated way. So as I work with other teachers, I see how we can work together to better integrate our courses."

A senior level teacher has also found that, "as teachers begin to collaborate more, they see opportunities to begin to integrate aspects of their courses." It seems then that collaboration can help teachers think in a more integrated manner."

Another teacher stated: " By working collaboratively there is more sharing and ownership. People feel like they're all part of it rather than someone just doing it and saying "Yeah, now do this." Another high school teacher from another school put it this way: "It's just too difficult to do on your own. You need someone to bounce ideas off of , even if it's just that. Certainly in the classroom, there is one course that Donna and I have been team teaching and that's sort of the ultimate form of collaboration".

Again one of the barriers to collaboration includes the timetable in the upper grades. Another of the challenges to collaboration that teachers spoke about was the lack of the necessary time to build effective relationships. The principal said, "the nature of this organization is one very much based upon relationships and that actually becomes an extra burden. It is a very important and special quality of this school, but it does have its challenges." The challenge comes from the time needed to build and maintain relationships. Many teachers agreed with the principal. They said that because of all the work that there is to do in this school, they feel they do not have the time to build meaningful working relationships with their colleagues. Therefore, lack of time impedes the collaboration process. To cope, several teachers deliberately used any opportunity to nurture relationships with their colleagues. As one teacher explained, "I really see it as a process of being proactive and building relationships with my colleagues on an ongoing basis. So if I see a teacher that I don't know that well at the photocopier, I will go up to the person and introduce myself and begin a conversation. I think that's all the kind of stuff we have to do more of here."

Some teachers also identified another barrier to collaboration in that they felt they could not always find the right work partner.

In summary, however, this year we found more examples of people working together particularly at the intermediate and senior levels. Although there are many obstacles to true

collaboration, this is the one area that teachers were very positive about throughout the entire study.

Leadership and Creating a Culture of Change

Last year we found, in schools where the changes were being implemented, that there was a lot of praise for the principal and/or the vice principal. This was true for both secondary and elementary schools. This trend continued this year. We asked about how leadership is being provided by the principal and vice principal, the department head and consultant. The data clearly focused on the role of the principal and vice principal as the other two roles seemed to have less influence on what was happening in the schools and are even being eliminated in some boards.

Many teachers commented on the positive role of the principal. Some comments from elementary teachers from different schools included:

> "Oh it's (the leadership) excellent. The VP is very aware of new curriculum and is involved in the development of it. . . The principal is very involved in computers and encourages us to do the same."
>
> "Well I would have to say that administrators I'm working with now are very encouraging. Certainly the last administrator was too."
>
> "Our principal is pretty flexible. If there is something that he sees that we are very concerned about, he will adjust the agenda and take the time to discuss it so we know what is going on. He also spurs us to think about things and take a stand where we feel it's important."
>
> "Well, I think we are really fortunate here. She is just an excellent leader. She motivates us. She has high expectations for us."

Teachers from different secondary schools tended to echo this views. The things that teachers appreciated in their principals and vice principals included:

1) Encouraging teachers to take risks.
2) Setting a positive tone in the school

3) Being receptive to teachers' ideas
4) Being visible in the school and not being away from the school
5) Delegating responsibility
6) Communicating clearly with staff.
7) Leading by example through modeling.

An important characteristic found in a few schools has been the emergence of shared leadership among all the school's stakeholders. The chair of the advisory council of one school stated that leadership in the school is very much shared among the administrators, the teachers, the students and members of the advisory council. The co-chair of the same advisory council commented that the principal and vice-principal both "lead by example and they lead by consensus. They provide the opportunity for a high degree of input and involvement on the part of teachers and students. This approach to leadership has spread throughout the entire organization.

That's how the leadership teams run and how the teachers lead their student advisory groups." The administrators themselves talked about the importance of empowering teachers. One secondary school principal said: I would like to think that what I've left is a legacy of teachers that are more empowered.. . I think that teachers in this school feel that they have a bit more control of this school in terms of what happens in the school and the decisions that they make.

Another important strategy for sharing leadership is through the school's Teacher Advisory Groups. Every teacher leads an advisory group consisting of approximately 20 students from all grade levels. These groups meet weekly to discuss and work on issues important to the school's overall success. During these meetings, students also discuss their personal, academic or career-related concerns. Both of these strategies have played an important part in expanding the leadership roles of both teachers and students. This is especially evident in the views held by many of the teachers. The teachers we interviewed see themselves as leaders. A drama teacher said, "I see myself very much as a leader within this school in two ways. I help students and I also seem to play an important role in helping my coworkers cope with all the change." The chair of the advisory council states that students have also been encouraged to take leadership roles. "They are very much involved in the decisions made at this school. The students therefore see the school as theirs; they don't just attend it. Everyone takes ownership in this school."

The principal and vice-principal at one high school have made a commitment to being accessible and supportive. A drama teacher related that "the principal is very present in this

school and I feel free to go to both him and the vice-principal for anything. They are both very supportive and I never feel I'm out there alone. "I always feel supported in all I do." Another teacher said, "the most significant aspect of their approach to leadership is that they are receptive. On any issue I raise, I know I will be heard and taken seriously. In the end, even if I do not agree with a decision, I still feel fine with the situation because I know my idea was considered seriously." A business studies teacher added that the principal and the vice-principal's approach focuses on encouragement. "There is an encouragement to take risks, to be entrepreneurial and to try things. They communicate support, and if you need someone to talk to, they are there. Also, if something doesn't work out, there's no blaming." She continued by saying that failure is not seen as a negative, but rather merely a process of learning and growing.

An elementary school vice principal talked about the importance of being a facilitator.

> "Here it is mostly a facilitating aspect. Whatever ideas the staff come up with are good. It can be improved, it's not always state-of the -art but 60% of it's there. It's just matter of providing the time, a few resources that kind of thing.

A secondary school vice-principal talked about the importance of developing curriculum leaders in the school:

> "My hope is that we will have the leeway at the school level to provide incentives for people to be leaders even though they may not have the title, because we need more curriculum leaders now with all of the changes occurring in order to even maintain the quality of education that we have."

Finally, it is interesting to note that in one of the schools where change was limited, the principal focused on the role of principal as providing stability and consistency.

In summary, it has become a cliché that the principal is integral to a school's ability to deal with change and our findings strongly support that generalization.

The Challenges of Change

Because the changes mandated by the Ministry of Education and Training are complex and multidimensional, we have had to examine the change process. In the first year, we found that change was occurring on broken fronts. A number of barriers were identified in the first two years such as the lack of time and resources, the timetable and few opportunities for professional development; and, again, many of these same barriers were identified this year.

In the second year, we concluded that many of the teachers we interviewed were feeling more positive about the changes. This trend continued this year with teachers feeling more comfortable about outcomes based education, and assessment strategies. The identification of positive student response is also a factor here.

The main barrier to change identified by teachers over the all three years has been lack of time. The main problem is "time, time, time, and more time", as stated by one teacher. Time is particularly needed for collaborative planning and to obtain adequate in-service.

This year many of those interviewed talked about the present government as barrier to change. Some of the comments included:

> "As professionals we feel battered by all sorts of external forces. I resent that external agencies are creating problems for us that are not of our own making. As an administrator I feel that I am solving the problems that others are creating." (secondary school principal)

> "I think the impact of last year the number of cuts to our system and the loss of teachers, and then perhaps being pessimistic about what will be happening in the province, seriously impacts on the integrity of what you can do." (secondary school teacher)

> "Politically I think we are in the hornet's nest. . . .It is difficult to just work in a vacuum and say that these things don't have an impact." (secondary school teacher)

> "The media and the Ministry have not been kind to us and that is a definite downside for all of the things that they are throwing at us. . . So I would say that is one of the hardest challenges right now. . .to have an sympathetic and seemingly unsupportive government at Queen's Park right now." (elementary school teacher)

Another barrier to change identified by a few teachers this year included larger class sizes. One teacher at the intermediate level stated:

> "Well, my biggest challenge, once again, is the fact that there are so many different abilities, so many levels in one class, and the size of the classes.. . . I've gone from teaching classes of twenty children up to classes now of thirty-three to thirty-five."

The increase in class size, of course, is another result of government cutbacks. Generally teachers feel they are being asked to do much more with fewer resources.

Some teachers were concerned about the pace of change and the need for the right comfort level for teachers. One vice-principal said: "a comfort level for the teachers must be achieved before (integration, outcome-based education and alternative forms of assessment) can be implemented within a school's program". Some individuals expressed concern about slowing the pace of change. One principals said: "I guess what I'm saying is that if we could stop it for just a little while."

Stress

In the first two years of the study, stress was an emerging issue for teachers. This year fewer teachers talked about stress. There were a few comments but not as many as in previous years. One teacher said: "I'm more tired every year. I don't have a life." Another teacher said: "I can't do the job. Not the job I used to do. . .It's just physically impossible to do that any more." Finally another teacher said: "I think over the past five years, I've become more frustrated than ever with teaching to the point where I've considered doing something else. How do they expect us to do this job anymore?"

Other teachers expressed concerns about workload and the lack of time but in general the kind of comments made by the two teachers above were fewer in number. However, several people commented on the problem of staff morale. Again, teachers referred to the present government as a primary source of a kind of a general malaise in education. Two teachers finished their interviews with the following comments that summed up this feeling:

> "I really think that it's a kind of a sad time in education. I just wish that our Minister of Education would have a little more faith in what our teachers are doing. . . I really wonder what's at the core of it all because I don't think it's children. So then I have to ask him, who is he serving by being the Minister of Education."

> "I have about three more years to teach, and I've loved every minute of teaching, but there's a part of me saying I'm glad I'm near the end, and I feel really bad that education is in turmoil, at this time, because I really believe we have a good education system."

Professional Development

Over the past two years, teachers have stated that there has been a lack of professional development due to cutbacks. This concern continued this year. In a few cases there were references to board consultants continuing to provide professional development. One teacher

said, "I would speak very highly of the Curriculum Department who set up workshops and encouraged participation." But generally people acknowledge that because of the cutbacks, the board could not provide the professional development that they might have in the past. One of the main new trends identified this year is that training is occurring mostly at the school level. In some cases teachers spoke of informal professional development. One high school teacher said in responding to the question on P.D., ""Nothing that comes to mind that was formal, scheduled...most of if has been informal, ad hoc, as when in the hallway, over lunch etc." Projects initiated at the school level have served as professional development. In one secondary school there were action research teams that pursued different sorts of projects and some of these projects were to provide professional development. One teacher in commenting on her committee said, "There is plenty of PD at the school where we try to meet each other. For example, I am on a committee, the global education committee, where we exchange ideas and disseminate information."

In one board, self-development is recognized in the board's professional development framework. Based on a board document, teachers must submit a growth plan in which they may choose to work alone, with a colleague or supervisor. At a high school in this board, some teachers are pursuing these projects using the inquiry technique they learned as part of mandatory action research teams that were created two years before. The framework appears to be working well, allowing teachers to become inquirers. An intermediate teacher from another school commented: " We work together with the planning of the unit to decide what the activities will be and what outcomes we hope to achieve before we set activities. . . We work fairly closely together." Another level is where teachers collaborate with students and parents. Some teachers negotiate with students what they will study in an integrated unit.

One elementary school teacher said, "More and more we've had school based workshops in the past few years...because of the cutbacks we've more or less had to do our own professional development at the school." A teacher from another elementary school in another board stated:

> "This year the emphasis has been on having the school kind of 'take the ball,' so our school itself is having division meetings and staff meetings and is helping to provide that leadership to keep us going."

Staff meetings at some schools serve as professional development. One elementary teacher said: "All our staff meetings are always staff development."

In conclusion, professional development is being redefined from PD provided by the school system to PD initiated at the school level or by the teachers themselves. One teacher said that professional development is self-development and others spoke about providing their own professional development through university courses and through their own reading. One secondary teacher commented on his community work as professional development by saying, "My membership in organizations and the kind of leading that I do, I feel count as professional development. I would say that it is professional development when I take some of those ideas and invest them in my own class to test them out."

Providing for their own training needs and in some cases, those of their colleagues, has become another challenging change in the role of the teacher.

The Role of the Teacher

We asked participants in the study about the teacher's role and whether they felt there had been any change. A few people felt that there had been no major change to speak of. Most participant, however, noted some significant changes. For example, some teachers talked about how the role had become more demanding in terms of accountability. One teacher said "Your every move has to be proven." Another said that there is less opportunity for creativeness as you are expected to cover more content. We found that teachers roles had shifted in the following ways:

The Teacher as Caregiver

The teacher is expected to do a lot more for the social needs of the child. Consider the following comments:

> "We are seeing students in the school who are very needy. Either they are coming from truly poverty stricken backgrounds with all the problems that poverty brings, or they are coming from families that are extremely dysfunctional. The role of teacher involves social worker elements and even quasi- parenting elements." (elementary school teacher)

> "Your role is a negotiator. . . sometimes there is a lot more confrontations with students in and outside the classroom that maybe there was. So I have to cope more with an

erosion of authority, moral authority than maybe teachers did 15 years ago." (secondary school teacher)

"I think that you are becoming more and more a psychiatrist." (elementary school teacher)

"I find myself doing a lot more mothering than I ever did before." (secondary school teacher)

"You wouldn't believe how many parents expect us to socialize their children as well as educate them." (elementary school teacher)

The Teacher as Facilitator

Another key change identified by teachers is the shift from the role of teacher as information provider to one of being a facilitator of learning. Here again are some teacher comments.

"One thing is becoming far less a person who knows all the answers. There is far more of a coaching mode. Saying 'I don't know the answer, but I have some skills in finding the answer, so let's find the answer together.'" (secondary school teacher)

"I see the role of the teacher as being much more of a facilitator saying, here's where I want you to get to. . . . I mean the most important quality in a teacher, I think is to let the kids ask questions, because if the kids are asking questions means it's important to them, and that means they'll remember it easier." (elementary school teacher)

"I'm more of a facilitator, there to spur the students into creative thinking and greater thinking." (secondary school teacher)

Teacher as Leader

In relation to their role, we asked teachers if they saw themselves as leaders. Again the large majority saw themselves as leaders and they usually defined leadership in an informal way. One secondary school teacher said:

> "I also see myself as a sort of informal leader with many of the staff. I'm not fooling myself, but I do know that I speak up at staff meetings. I give my views and I'm not frightened to do so and I think that people respect my views. . .not all the time, obviously and certainly not everyone agrees with me or whatever. But I think that in some respects, instead of saying a leader...I would say that at times I take on a leadership role."

For others they see themselves as leaders because they organize activities. One teacher said he organizes a function for all the teachers and their spouses at his home. Other teachers referred to workshops that they had given to other teachers. In this regard the changing face of professional development which we covered under that topic was a significant way in which teachers saw themselves as leaders in a new way. Some teachers saw themselves as leaders because they help younger staff members as informal mentors. One elementary school teacher summed up her role as leader as an equal partner that was representative of many other teachers as well:

> "I see myself as equal I guess, to other colleagues and sitting down and doing some problems solving around whatever happens to be. . . .I guess a leader is somebody who is willing to take things on and try their best, and work in collaboration with their colleagues."

Teacher as Learner

We asked the participants whether they saw themselves as learners and the almost universal answer was a strong "Yes." Here are some sample responses to the question "Do you see yourself as a learner?"

> "Definitely, every day, all the time. Everything that goes on we are learning all the time, so I sure see myself as that."

> "Always. Yes."

> "Every day I am a learner. It's not something that we stop doing, for sure. We need to be very attentive to the vibes presented by the students, and especially by the staff."

> "Oh, all the time. You name it, I've taken it. I would say that I'm a fairly good definition of a life-long learner."

"Yes, I really enjoy learning new things. . . .I am open to new things. I read a great variety of books, and I am more into I guess academic things."

"You are learning all the time. Probably half the job is learning."

Besides books and courses, several teachers referred to the importance of learning from the kids. Here are some of the comments.

"I always learn from the kids. I mean I learn from them what I'm doing wrong. I mean if they are just not getting it I think, 'Gee, I didn't handle that too well.'"

"Every day. With my kids, you know, in the classroom. I'm a learner."

"I probably learn most from my students and their reactions to the various activities."

How teachers in this study see themselves as learners is one of the most encouraging part of this study.

We also asked participants what they learned over the past few years.. There was a broad range of answers. The most frequently mentioned item was learning to work with others. Here are comments:

"I guess I've learned the value of working with a colleague. That's inspirational and supportive."

"I have learned . . . that you can't do it alone."

"I guess that the biggest thing is how to collaborate with other people."

"Well I guess I would center on the quotation from John Dunne that "no man is an island", that teaching is very much a collaborative enterprise and is very much of communal activity."

"I have learned that people really work together as a team."

Other participants focused on personal qualities and the two most frequently mentioned were *patience* and *flexibility*. Some participants mentioned certain specific content or skill learning, for example, learning about OBE, multiple intelligences, computers and cooperative learning. Finally some participants focused on the external pressures that can affect the school. One teacher said; " I've learned that I think a lot of politicians make work for the sake of justifying their jobs." One principal put it this way:

> I guess I have learned the fragility of the organization. How significant events can alter the direction and have such a great impact on things. The point where. . .from the nature of the pink slips that were given last year and even measuring the achievement of our kids and how they changed after that. . . the ramifications of that and how long it takes to recover from that as an organization.. . .That is reinforcement to me of how everything is really connected.

Overview

Over the three years of this study there has been unprecedented change. What is also clear is that more change looms ahead. What can we learn from the schools in this study to help negotiate this change?

We found changes were being implemented in pockets. Some pockets were very advanced in their understanding and implementation. Others had not moved very far and one school in our study had deliberately decided not to rock the boat and to stay with the status quo as much as possible. These decisions ultimately seemed to rest with the strength of the board directives and the philosophy of the administrators who were involved. One board had a outcome-based philosophy in place that gave direction for the changes and allowed for integrative and comprehensive changes at all levels of the board. Such an integrative and comprehensive approach involving all levels is the most effective way for reform to happen. (Lipzitz et al., 1997). Other boards had more difficulties as changes in key board personnel at the central office often created a temporary obstacle to ongoing plans.

The link between central office and schools was often a disappointing one. Generally those teachers who believed that they were receiving direction from consultants or coordinators were in the elementary panel. Secondary teachers tended to have the attitude that they had no need for outside resources and saw themselves as experts in their subject areas. Those who were

in touch with central office curriculum personnel were high in their praise. Government policy has drastically reduced the number of bodies in such jobs and as a result there is often little that can be done from central office despite sometimes valiant efforts to do so. There seemed, however, to be a general acceptance that central office was not able to give as much guidance as before.

Outcomes for educators.

Our study was set in the context of understanding what teachers learned. How did they make meaning of the mandates from the Ministry? How did they cope with change? We have looked then at outcomes for teachers in our search for understanding reform. As Fullan has told us, we need to focus on what is happening at the grass roots and to understand what teachers have learned if we are going to implement reform that works (Fullan, 1996). Educators demonstrated outcomes in the following areas, specific in the following areas.

Teachers as learners:

Generally, teachers described themselves as learners - whether it was from the standpoint of learning from students, each other or personal, professional development. This is very encouraging in light of the literature that suggests we need to develop learning organizations (Senge, 1990) to deal effectively with ongoing change. it is this capacity and willingness to learn that has facilitated successful reform.

New understanding of curriculum delivery

Teachers were able to understand and implement new curriculum demands when there was a common understanding among staff and the administrator(s) had not only supported the change but had actively taken part in creating opportunities and time to work on the changes. Most successful were the efforts in outcome-based learning and alternative assessment. This is probably because a focus on both outcomes and assessment satisfies the current need for accountability and so emphasis was put on these areas to address public concerns.

Interdisciplinary learning was introduced more frequently in classrooms where teachers were so inclined rather than there being a concerted effort by a whole school in this direction. This may be because there are a wide variety of ways to interpret such studies and there is no clear model to follow. Still it is interesting to note that the most enjoyment was expressed by teachers who were working with integrated approaches to learning. Students also enjoyed this curriculum approach. As well, students seemed to appreciate outcomes because they were aware of what specific criteria they had to fulfill.

Another important shift is the number of educators who now perceive their role as facilitators instead of transmitters of knowledge. This attitude was evident at all levels of education. Being a facilitator is how teachers see their role with students, principals with teachers and central office personnel with whomever they were working.

The shift many have not made is understanding that all the changes are aligned in ways that create a fundamentally new educational system. This is a difficult dilemma since educators can realistically only assimilate so much change at one time. So they work at pieces of the whole (such as outcome and assessment) without understanding the links. Hopefully, this fuller understanding will come as people are given more TIME and directives from the Ministry become clearer.

Attitude to change

In the first year of this study many of the teachers resisted changes and stress was a major concern of most teachers. By the third year most teachers had accepted that change was inevitable and stress was still mentioned, but not with the same intensity. The focus of their attention shifted from concern over curriculum changes to external factors such as the new policies of the conservative government that seemed to threaten the fundamentals of all that teachers had come to expect as a part of the job.

Teachers seemed to have accepted the fact that their world was changing. For some, this was stimulating and exciting; others shut their classroom door, saying they had always done it that way and proceeded as before. In some cases, this is because they see retirement looming ahead and do not want to expend the energy needed for change. However, the researchers noted that age was not a factor in how individuals reacted to change. Rather, attitude was the determining characteristic.

The most encouraging thing in the study were the number of positive voices that we heard. Supported by administration, teachers were finding the changes expected of them actually worked in the classroom. As well, they found that they were learning a lot themselves and this was energizing. Rather than complaining about being "burnt out" they were taking the new mandated changes in their stride. They were demonstrating "resilience" the characteristic that Connors,(1995) says is key to handling change.

Collaboration

From year one, the aspect of reform that teachers most enjoyed was collaboration with colleagues. Indeed the collaboration energized them. This satisfaction with collaboration was echoed throughout the three years and was the only positive factor that we found present from the beginning of the study. The other outcomes emerged as time went by. Collaboration differed in definition. For some it was talking to colleagues at the water cooler (a new activity) while for others it was full-blown collaboration occurring over a long period of time (a team of teachers developing and implementing an interdisciplinary curriculum).

This discovery of the benefits of collaboration augers well for new ways to working together as we move through the next set of changes that confront us. As Hargreaves (1994) reminds us, developing a collaborative culture in a school is essential for successful restructuring.

Teacher as leader/professional development

As each school attempted to make sense of the new mandates, two shifts occurred. First, some of the teachers became "teacher leaders". That is they were concerned with policies outside their own classroom and making a difference in a larger context - usually their own school. Sometimes this was carefully orchestrated by the administration in tandem with teachers, for example, setting up new lines of responsibility at the high school level and establishing action research teams to wrestle with issues of concern.

At the same time, the concept of professional development shifted from one day inservices to ongoing projects within the school. Educators were taking hold of their own development. We believe that this is a significant shift that will stand educators well.

These shifting concepts were affected by policies from the new government such as severe economic cuts and the establishing of the College of Teachers. As a result, there is still a tension among teachers about being told to change in ways that they are not sure will be better. However, some changes, such as the new elementary curriculum seem to offer a clearer path to teachers in that expectations are clearly delineated.

Conclusion:

At the end of our three year study we are heartened that teachers are basically positive. We know that there is much more change to come. Often it seems like the blind leading the blind and it can be very discouraging. Although there were only pockets of full-scale change, in retrospect, there has been tremendous change across all boards. We believe that the lessons that have been learned will serve us well in the years to come. This study indicated that educators have learned how to collaborate and to think about education in fundamentally different ways. As well, they know how to successfully manage change and act as change agents. We have been most impressed by the quality of the teachers and educators with whom we have been in contact. They are caring, dedicated people who are concerned above all with making schools the best place they can be for students to learn. During the past three years we have witnessed important steps towards negotiating new models of education in changing times. We believe that Ontario educators do have the will and persistence to make discerning decisions about further implementation of new curriculum requirements and that education in Ontario is indeed doing well despite sometimes negative press to the contrary.

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